COSMIC EXISTENTIALISM

: An Introduction Through Science-Fiction Narratives

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by

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis entitled **"COSMIC EXISTENTIALISM: An Introduction Through Science Fiction Narratives"** has been carried out under the guidance of **Raghu Menon** and has not formed the basis for the award of any other degree, diploma or fellowship previously.

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CERTIFICATE

The research embodied in this thesis entitled **"COSMIC EXISTENTIALISM: An Introduction Through Science Fiction Narratives"** was conducted by **Soumita Bhattacharyya** at the Manipal Centre for Humanities under the supervision and guidance of **Raghu Menon.**

It is hereby certified that the thesis submitted is a bonafide record of research done by the candidate in fulfilment of the requirements for **BA Humanities (English)** degree, and that the thesis has not previously formed the basis for the award to the candidate of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or any other similar title of any other university or society.

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ABSTRACT

Through this dissertation, the works by Olaf Stapledon and Stanislaw Lem (Star Maker and Solaris, respectively) would be widely approached in the understanding of the notion (or the advent) of Cosmic Existentialism. Focusing on the aspects of these novels that evolve around existential thought in the cosmic scale.

Keywords: Cosmic Existentialism, Crises, The Absurd, Cosmic Insignificance, Star Maker, The Creator, Search for Purpose, Solaris, Introspection, Isolation, Cosmic Dilemma.

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INTRODUCTION

Through this dissertation, I would be approaching the genre and theme of cosmic existentialism through the science fiction works- *Starmaker (1937)* and *Solaris (1961)* transitioning from large scale centric narratives to intimate yet cosmic narratives through the existential lens.

In the first chapter, the understanding of the crux of existentialism and its broad themes that come under philosophy to create a base for defining the term- Cosmic Existentialism is crucial. Through philosophers such as Sartre, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Camus as well as Jaspers and many such others to support in the same. understanding aspects of 'existence precedes essence' which explains the notion of experience without any presuppositions in life. Also taking Greek philosophy into notice to grasp the traces of existentialism with time.

We would further delve into the core themes of existentialism by influential figures that dealt with the themes that coerced with the newly formulated term of cosmic existentialism. Such as themes of anxiety, alienation, absurdity, and authenticity as well. The notion of responsibility and its thin lining with burden with respect to individual experience is also to be put focused on.

Existentialism has been difficult to define, hence, it gave the space to various kinds of interpretation and understanding- ultimately creating various themes and deviations (branches). Further after discussing about the existentialists and their expertise, we would formulate cosmic existentialism.

When it comes to individual freedom and choice for subjective experience, it ultimately also creates a sense of anxiety when realized in the cosmic scale. Hence, delving upon the notion of cosmic existentialism and its advent in the twentieth century along with the one of existentialism. To create a clear understanding of the search for meaning and purpose in the universe that does not provide any (meaning). Which also indicates in understanding of death and mortality. Due to its similarities with other aspects of existentialism, for example- absurdism, it makes it easier to understand the former. Hence, a philosophical blend creates space for more flexibility in such themes.

We also make sure that this cosmic existentialism is not the same as Cosmicism, coined by Lovecraft for his speculative and fictional novels. Doing an in-depth understanding of the same.

Another major factor in cosmic existentialism is that of the stance of God and religion. Existential theology is introduced in the first chapter, with the support of thinkers such as Nietzsche and Kierkegaard as well as

minor references from Heidegger. This is briefly mentioned to be important for the understanding of such themes in the two novels being discussed here- *Star Maker* (1937) and *Solaris (1961).* The historical context is also introduced in the first chapter, revolving around the social and political situation of Europe during the advent of existentialism as well as traces of cosmic existentialism.

The first chapter stands as the backbone of this dissertation, creating a platform to understand the base of cosmic existentialism, that is, existentialism. To be able to analyze and understand as well as recognize such themes in the two novels.

The second and the third chapters would revolve around the analyses of the renowned science fiction works- *Star Maker* and *Solaris.* These analyses would primarily revolve around the elements of cosmic existentialism found in the novels. Both chapters would firstly introduce the author and their perspectives that led to them writing such works. Their inspirations as well as influences would be discussed and would be taken reference from eventually in those chapters.

Chapter 2 is regarding Olaf Stapledon's *Star Maker,* where firstly there is an introduction to the author, creating an atmosphere of the author's interests and knacks that led to them writing such works. From his demand on the readers to incline towards astronomical tendencies to the mythical aspect and interpretation of his works. Following this will be the introduction to the novel. Where there is a linkage created between the creator and the product (writer and novel). There is also applied to focus on the intentions of the author in *Star Maker.* The inspirations as well as Stapledon's personal interests regarding the same.

Further would come the section of historical context- during the publication of the novel around Europe. Ther would be discussion of all the various events in Europe (around and with the author) during the time of publication, as well as the time around it. Here, Stapledon's situation was explained during the Second World War and the distress it created in Europe. The way it had triggered this work with respect to the time and place. The undertones of the writing were described that perhaps portrayed such distress and times of despair. This would follow the actual in-depth understanding of the novel, with selective chapter wise elaborative insight. Through the existential lens, and then eventually through the thematic lens of cosmic existentialism. Separately, there would be sections of crucial sections such as that of 'Overhead Obscurity' which is often mentioned in the first half of the novel, another would be 'Telepathic Phenomenon' and many other (such as stance of God and the encounter with the Star Maker) that made *Star Maker* even more

influential and important in the genre. They would be explained through the lens of cosmic existentialism in detail and would end with a conclusive section.

The third chapter would revolve around the novel *Solaris (1961)* by Stanislaw Lem. Slowly transitioning from the outer- space perspective to the inner and personal (intimate) perspective with respect to the cosmos. Starting with the introduction to the author, discussing about his expertise and interests and approach to writing. Followed by the introduction to *Solaris* as a novel. Analyzing its nuances and the author's approach to writing the same.

The historical context that would follow, would be centric to the socio-political situation in the place surrounding the author, that is, the author was Polish, hence, centric to Polish history and the internal-external conflicts around the same time as well as around the time of publication of the book. To create space for understanding the origin of the reasoning for such narratives and niches. After that would come the understanding of the plot with regards to cosmic existentialism. Introducing the characters and their behaviors, their triggers and their grievances. With regards to the context of cosmic existentialism and its attributes. Similar to that of chapter two, I would take specific events that were crucial in the construction of the novel. Such as that of the beginning of the book, where Kelvin met the rest of the crew, their behaviors were crucial in the understanding of the novel. The other crucial event/ elements of the novel- the ocean as well as the encounter with protagonist's lover. The dilemma he had faced whether to leave Solaris or stay (with regards to his lover's existence in the planet). Ultimately concluding with insight.

CHAPTER 1- GENESIS OF COSMIC EXISTENTIALISM

2.1)Introducing Existentialism

Existentialism, as widely understood, is a philosophical thought that explores and deals with the nature of humankind's existence. Fundamentally, the word 'existence' derived from a Latin word- 'existere', which translated to be "come into being" (Jha, 2020, p.no.,60). Though difficult to define due to its variety of perspectives, it was profoundly impactful on the fields of literature, philosophy and art (as well as other forms) from the nineteenth century till, perhaps, present. Applying Wittgenstein's idea of 'family resemblances' in his work *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), he had proposed the idea of realizing that not every concept should have/ or has an essential definition. It is important and crucial to understand the notion of existentialism in order to be able to define Cosmic existentialism.

Barnes had attempted to define existentialism by saying that human beings understand their sense of existence through their experiences- through the sense of feel. This could also be understood broadly by Sartre's notion of 'existence precedes essence', which explained how life could not have presupposed and predetermined purpose or meaning instead it was to be realized that humankind explores and experiences throughout their life without any sense of presupposition. Adding to that, Jha said in his journal, "humans decide values and determine meaning in their life through their consciousness" (Jha, 2020, p.no.,60). This contradicted from Aristotle's understanding of existence, which revolved around quite the opposite- essence precedes existence' that indicated that perhaps a person's life and actions were predetermined. Sartre had rejected this idea of existence.

2.2) Core Themes of Existentialism by Seminal Figures

Existentialism as a philosophy has existed since pre-Socratic times, although not as a movement but as themes and brief instances. These themes often dealt with freedom, search for meaning, absurdity, anxiety, alienation, as well as authenticity and ultimately the crux of individual human experience. That (the themes) followed throughout the journey of existentialism from its emergence till its 'death' and beyond. Due to its non-definable nature (taking from Wittgenstein's idea of it), existentialism gave space to wide interpretation and deviations, in other words- branches. Such as Albert Camus's existentialism was focused mainly on Absurdism and how Kierkegaard's was primarily about God and religion and its stance on existentialism and much more.

Existentialism, in terms of experience and subjectivity, was expressed by Jaspers as well as Heidegger in similar notions regarding it. Jaspers based his thesis on freedom and choice. As well as for existence to not be complete and always to be in progress. Originating from Heraclitean understanding of 'becoming'. Thus, in colloquial terms, one explores oneself through experience while one goes. Jaspers also focused solely on the existence of humankind, in the sense that he had pursued the rejection of the essence of God and nature. Giving space to the individual and their 'power' and perhaps the burden to take responsibility for their actions. "Man is free, however, because no one can choose for him; therefore, he can be bound only by his own decisions. Of course, he must choose" (Barnes, 1968, p.no., 64). Radical individualism, referring to the responsibility of the self to search for purpose in a world that lacks inherent meaning, was one of the crucial notions/ concepts in understanding existentialism. Hence, involving the notions of freedom and choice is often done by Jaspers. Heidegger, on the other hand, had influenced Sartre and his perception of existence. Heidegger focused more on the significance of human existence in the world, that is, solely focusing on self without the assistance of other elements such as God and Nature. "He believes that the world is solely a matter of human concern" (ibid.).

Two figures, who were crucial and foundational in understanding this twentieth-century movement were Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. They both had contrasting beliefs and perceptions regarding this philosophical thought. Despite there being a difference in views, a collective set of core themes and philosophical aspects were linked between the two thinkers. Kierkegaard influenced Jaspers and Heidegger in shaping the movement, had advocated subjectivity as truth in his work *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments (1846).* Truth could not be objective; it was embedded with personal experiences and beliefs. The other major concept advocated by Kierkegaard was that of God and religion, Christianity. Developed from the work *Fear and Trembling (1843),* the term 'leap of faith' regarded the notion of belief and faith in God or any other spiritual aspects despite there being the lack of evidence as well as rational certainty. Hence, the introduction to existential theology. Concerning this, Nietzsche's notions of existentialism were quite the contrary. Nietzsche argued against the traditional methods of perception towards truth and knowledge. He had also perceived himself to be an antichrist. Although Nietzsche was not against the faith towards Christianity instead, he was against this notion that created a paradox- the principles created by the religion. That would create unsustainability in proving its claims. "Christianity,

according to Nietzsche's original and genuine theme, would succumb then, not to the ancient and ever-repeated conflict of knowledge and faith, but to the intellectual honesty of faith itself—and in such a way that faith has to be increasingly sacrificed to the extent that is unable to justify itself before the will to the truth of knowledge, which faith itself demanded and developed"(Grau, 1985, p.no., 228). Therefore, as this religion demands truth, it ultimately succumbs to its standards (of truth), and hence, the entire notion of the religion changes. This ultimately created an ironic situation for religion in terms of its faith. This led to his saying- "death of God" due to the reasoning above as well as the advent of modernity and its existential (and moral) dilemmas, that he mentions in two of his famous works- *The Gay Science (1882)* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra (1885)*. Which ultimately questioned the understanding of one's faith and beliefs as well as one's way of life. Some of which would be relevant to the following chapters regarding cosmic existentialism.

Search for meaning brings Camus and his perception of existentialism. Including one of the many crucial figures in existentialism- Marcel, (as well as Sartre) their philosophy revolved around the rejection of any kind of undermining of the aspect of individual freedom and choice centric to one's experience. Camus' primary notion of existentialism would focus on the absurdity of the world and life itself. The other take on it would be the scenario of how an individual perceives their life in this absurd world. In this regard, Marcel's philosophy would refer to "one can say that a great part of it is devoted to revealing to man what he is and what his spiritual activities, his truly human activities, imply"(Copleston, 1948, p.no., 22). Here, 'man' refers to the free individual. Hence, against the totalitarian idea of self in society. "A revolt against positivism, materialistic determinism and psychological determinism, against any form of philosophy which would reduce man to an item in the physical cosmos, so as this would imply determinism, and against any form of philosophy which excludes a consideration of man's inner life and destiny" (ibid.).

2.3) Defining Cosmic Existentialism

Deriving an understanding of cosmic existentialism by following the above trail of thought. One could define it as a philosophical perspective or as well as a thematic lens that indulges in existential thought concerning the cosmic realm and its vastness as well as other various elements that comprise it. These existential themes play a crucial role in formulating as well as understanding the advent of this philosophical perspective. Cosmic existentialism revolves around the search for purpose and meaning in the vastness of the cosmos, lacking inherent meaning. It also emphasizes the sense of responsibility and perhaps burden in the uncertainty and the notion of the unknown in the universe. Hence, this creates a sense of indifference among humankind, giving space to imagination and awe. Existentialism focuses on themes such as that of anxiety, alienation, dread, often paranoia, absurdity, individual freedom and responsibility as well as death and mortality. It often goes hand-in-hand with the ones of cosmic existentialism. Therefore, philosophers such as Sartre, Camus, Nietzsche as well as Kierkegaard and Heidegger. Creating a platform for a unified philosophical blend of the two perspectives. Since cosmic existentialism is not developed explicitly to be a movement, it provides more space for a variety of perspectives as well as fluidity.

It differs from that of Lovecraft's *Cosmicism*, which revolved around, similar to that of cosmic existentialism, the insignificance of humankind in the universe, although emphasizing more on the mechanical (metaphorical in the sense of the 'cold' world) aspect of it. It dealt with creating a genre or a platform coined by Lovecraft for his works that focused on the horror developed from the cosmic spaces. "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown" (Lovecraft, 1927). Lovecraft also often emphasized the theological aspect of the genre, that is, on the absence of God and religion in the universe, creating more discussion on the insignificance of human beings on Earth concerning time and space. Most of the stories in Lovecraft's works were often beyond human comprehension, fantasy-oriented, with intricate character descriptions and settings. "Like most things in the tales of Lovecraft, it merely operates on an entirely different plane of understanding. It is far too beyond the human comprehension to understand, as it warps and twists the human mind incapable of handling it" (Halldorsson, 2010, p.no., 15). This stylistic choice was perhaps intentional, creating a sort of madness in the human mind when they realize the insignificance of their tiny lifespan while being compared to Lovecraft's universe.

This, as mentioned briefly earlier, is quite different from that of cosmic existentialism. It instead proposes to hope in life- to have a constant search for meaning and exploration despite there being a huge sense of insignificance while in comparison to the known (as well as the unknown) universe that led to the emergence of alienation, despair, existential dread and much more. Hence, a more existential approach to life in contrast to Lovecraft's approach of a more fear-centric perspective towards the infinite universe.

Cosmic existentialism often dealt with some aspects similar to the notion of God as well as religion discussed by philosophers such as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche (and others) with regard to belief and faith. Existential theology plays a crucial role in this paper, due to one of the novel's core themes to be of the same (Stapledon's *Starmaker- 1937*). Nietzsche rejected God (in a metaphorical sense) with respect to the decline of belief- as a result of the advent of modernity, claiming it to no longer be sustainable, as mentioned earlier. As well as that of the other novel *Solaris (1961),* where the ocean was a subject to having 'godly' characteristics.

2.4) Historical Context

This advent of modernity through existential thought perhaps emerged as a response (or rather reaction) to the various significant political and economic distresses. The 'arrival' of existentialism, that is, mid-twentieth century Europe, was entangled in a series of gruesome events/ happenings. Around the 30s, the Second World War was set and yet to occur whereas there was grief lingering around the then recently finished World War (WWI). And until the 60s, the deed was done. Both the world wars had occurred. Hence, given such tragedies, there is bound to be a reaction. From the genesis of abstract forms of expression (literature, philosophy, film, art, etc) to the emergence of existential crisis as well as postmodernism. Hence, to some extent, taking reference to what Crowell stated, "the more complex these societies become in welfare, the less they contribute to the inner welfare" (Crowell, 2012, p.no., 69).

2.5) Conclusion of themes

Furthermore, focusing on existentialists, finitude became one of the very crucial attributes of existential thinking. Mortality brought anxiety as well as dread, keeping in mind- with respect to both the world wars. With the notion of finitude, there is an emergence of the need for authenticity as well as a search for meaning and purpose once acknowledged its existence. Therefore, when involving this notion in the cosmic aspect of existentialism, there is a more figurative and heightened sense of mortality as well as finitude expressed

in this genre of existentialism. It is due to the fact that, when humankind is compared to the universe- which perceives to be constantly expanding, there is a sense of insignificance that takes part. This often perhaps turns to the stance of belief in the existence of an immortal being that overlooks (that is, God). This is widely visible in Stapledon's *Starmaker (1937),* where the protagonist encounters this immortal being called the Starmaker- the creator of all worlds. As well as in Stanislaw Lem's *Solaris (1961),* with the 'godly attributes' of the Ocean. These will be taken further in depth in the following chapters of this thesis, with regards to cosmic existentialism.

CHAPTER 2: *STAR MAKER*- QUEST FOR PURPOSE IN THE COSMOS

3.1) Introduction to the Author

One of the most significant authors around the time of both the World Wars, Olaf Stapledon, was a science fiction writer who dealt with humanity's fate and stance in the universe, which often turned to the insignificance of humankind compared to the universe. He focused on the spirit and the spirit's experience regarding the vastness (and the infiniteness) of the universe. Stapledon expressed the human condition often through tragic themes, with the help of telepathic narratives and their introspection towards the transcendence of the ever-evolving universe. Stapledon also focused on the notion of collectivism and cosmic consciousness. Which refers to the personality of a collective entity. Hence, contrasting the idea of radical individualism (that dealt with the focus on the individual self and their freedom and so on), with the notion of a collective cosmic consciousness.

His works could often be read as mystical as well as mythical narratives due to their fictional, fantastical and abstractive nature, giving space to interpretation. Although this is in nature, it is inclined more towards the cosmic perspective. He required the reader to put their spotlight more on astronomy and other relevant perspectives. "Stapledon never used the term 'science fiction', preferring to call his texts 'essays in myth creation' or 'romances of the future'"(Touponce 1930-1959, p.no., 3). As well as preferring his works to be under "fantastic fiction of a semi-philosophical kind" (ibid.). Hence, perhaps defying the traditional classification of literary works. His works were often also regarded as 'philosophical epics' and 'mythic panoramas' as well as 'cosmic micro histories' (ibid.). That led to the understanding of a collective aspect of humankind as well as the entirety of life throughout the entire cosmic realm.

Stapledon's understanding and perspective of the cosmos is visible to be intertwined with the outer and inner space (the universe and self), connecting aspects of existential themes and enlightenment, creating an understanding of the personal and the cosmos. He emphasized the crucial factor of the stance of humankind concerning the constant evolution of the universe. His works, as mentioned earlier, emphasized future-centric narratives. With the realization of the evolution of intelligence in humankind, as well as the presence of consciousness in the celestial bodies.

There is a sense of deep purpose expressed in the plots of Stapledon's works. Which is one of the very crucial virtues with regards to future consciousness as well as wisdom (Lombardo, n.d., p. no., 4), such as

that of the happenings in *Star Maker (1937),* which would be discussed later in this chapter. He also expressed a sense of deep purpose in the process of these works. This referred to the fact that there were purposeful elements included by him as a writer and a philosopher. "He sees the novels not only as exercises in the most immense leaps in imagination but also as vehicles to enlighten and inspire the reader and humanity as a whole" (ibid.). Hence, one of his main purposes was to be able to create a framework for a more enlightened understanding of reality requires situating it within a broader context, ontological as well as ethical.

Through this (his purpose and ideologies), there is an implied indication of Stapledon's upbringing as well as his holistic nature in writing. He had an education in the humanities as well as the sciences. Therefore, integrating literature, poetry, philosophy, astronomy and biology (and many others). A socio-political activist, also considered a romantic poet, indulged in philosophy as well as science fiction writing, Stapledon ultimately focused on the articulation of futuristic and utopian ideas to create a better society for humankind. Evolution was one of the key features of his works. Cosmic evolution was what Stapledon believed to be the fundamental element of reality, that shaped individual as well as collective identities. Although he was widely known for his futurist and science fiction narratives, this chapter will deal with the relevance of *Star Maker (1937)* to cosmic existentialism. Essentially, dealing with the existential thought evoked through the science fiction and large-scale narratives, as well as the aspects that dealt with the insignificance of humankind concerning the constant evolution of the universe among a multitude of universes.

3.2) Introduction to the Novel

Published in the year 1937, Olaf Stapledon's *Star Maker* had a lot of significance in the science fiction genre of literature. Arthur Clarke, influenced by Stapledon, had said that it is "probably the most powerful work of imagination ever written"(Boyarkina, 2019, p. 113). Inspired by the large-scale narratives, with cosmic and futuristic notions as well as the introspective nature of writing. The intention was to create a sense of consciousness to explore the universe concerning that of the mind and self (as a collective). Speculating on the evolution of humanity and its intelligence fifty billion years towards the future, then further approaching the notion of the multiverse and its existence and then ultimately coming in contact with the '*Star Maker'*- the Creator of all (universes).

This out-of-body experience of the protagonist who is also the narrator, leads to the understanding of an other-worldly experience, as well as a very introspective journey of the unnamed protagonist. This protagonist also perceived to be the author, hence, a fictional author as if Stapledon himself experienced this large-scale psychic episode/ adventure across time and space.

3.3) Historical Context During Publication

After the release of the book, Stapledon had received immense appreciation in the form of reviews by great writer, one being Bertrand Russell, "who praised Stapledon's 'fine intellectual courage', saying that his writing had a 'quality of austere beauty'." (Touponce, 1930-59, p.no., 13). Making an impact on world magazines on science fiction, as well as on SF writers. Given that World War II began two years following the publication of *Star Maker(1937),* Stapledon had turned to giving lectures in the army as well as air force bases, on subjects of social sciences and psychology. Although he continued his writing through the war years, on philosophical as well as political aspects and genres. In 1939, the year of World War, Stapledon had taken in a refugee student from Austria who was of Jewish ancestry and made him family through the years. The other incident that occurred during the war that affected him was the sinking of his son's ship in 1944, which was one of the few survivors.

Due to the unrest and uncertainty created by the World Wars, there were huge indications of the same in his works, as well as in *Star Maker.* Hence, the presence of underlying political perspectives, such as anxieties and uncertainties that could be understood from the concept of the cosmic scale, as well as philosophical urgency evoked in the book. There was a sense of growing disillusionment about religion, as well as often heightened nationalism. Giving rise to a spiritual venture beyond religion across worlds and universes. A sense of cosmic spirituality with a constant search for meaning and purpose in this world, with the absence of inherent meaning. This also indicated the stance of humankind and their significance (keeping in mind the unrest due to the wars) in the universe, while keeping in mind the narrative put forward by Stapledon- transcendence from the home universe to a large-scale picture. Hence, depicting humanity as a tiny 'entity' in comparison to the constant expansion of the known universe.

In continuity with the historical imbalance and distress around the 30s in Europe, Stapledon had expressed his views in the preface of this book. He expressed, "Year by year, month by month, the plight of our fragmentary and precarious civilization becomes more serious" (Stapledon, 1937, p.no., 1). He had also

said that due to these conditions and crises, writers went through a lot of struggles to put their thoughts across and that they had to do them with a lot of responsibility and courage. He mentioned various other issues that were faced due to the World Wars, to which he claimed that *Star Maker (1937)* could be taken as a distraction from the reality of society.

3.4) In-Depth Understanding of *Star Maker*

The crucial and central theme of Stapledon's *Star Maker* revolved around a telepathic and futuristic narrative that led to the journey of the protagonist from their own universe to a multitude of such universes. Focusing on the protagonist, unnamed, who was the narrator and, as mentioned earlier, was the fictional author of this book. The first chapter revealed by the name that the protagonist originated from planet Earth, and that he had lived with his lover. Apart from the rest of the world, for more than ten years, calling his relationship an 'intricate symbiosis'. His tendencies were existential with personal anxieties. Introspective even before the other-worldly experience. He called it bitterness, that he could taste (Stapledon, 1937, p.no., 4), which was perhaps a clue for one of the civilization's societal systems which the reader would later come across.

3.5) Chapter One

A sense of cosmic existentialism was expressed from the beginning of the novel, there were instances of insignificance in the first chapter when the protagonist expressed the notion of taking their (the protagonist and his lover's) lives for granted, "Had we, perhaps, misconceived our whole existence? Were we, as it were, living from false premises?" (Stapledon, 1937, p.no., 4). In the context of being within their own lives, in solitude. Calling the world "sick" and their lives a dream. There were indications of their troubled relationship, hence the introspection regarding their relationship from their past till the present setting. The first chapter unravels a number of times the feeling of insignificance with respect to the universe. Initially focusing on the pair, calling themselves a 'commonplace occurrence', he later moved to a community-stricken identity crisis. He had compared their relationship to that of the universe. The universe with its components- stars and other celestial bodies. Stated that others might not have found it significant enough to understand the universe, but for him, it was. Therefore, an absurdist approach to the understanding of the universe. Camus's absurdism revolved around the dilemma of the constant search for meaning in a world (and universe) that lacked inherent meaning and had nothing to provide predetermined meaning and called

it the absurd. Which the narrator did since the beginning, to grasp the meaning of his existence with his lover, initially. Although this thought escalated throughout the chapters.

3.6) Overhead Obscurity

There was a constant usage of the term 'overhead obscurity' in the first chapter, which could simply refer to the sky and the clouds. But rather, it had a more philosophical understanding of context. This expression had a more symbolic reference to it, perhaps referring to the limitations of human understanding (the sky as the limit expression) as well as the portrayal of the narrator's inner turmoil and confusion as the obscurity, which he ultimately transcends the moment he leaves the planet on his quest. "Overhead obscurity was gone. From horizon to horizon the sky was an unbroken spread of stars" (Stapledon, 1937, p.no., 7). This referred to the threshold that he crossed and became the start of the journey, keeping in mind the interpretation of the literal meaning of the term 'overhead obscurity'.

Things looked clearer in his mind, as well as what he saw and observed. Once exited his house and travelled away from his planet- Earth, he connected the 'dots'- the constellations. Once grasped the hoop of the Milky Way, he looked back at what he left behind, his abode, although submerged among the stars with unclear vision. He also mentioned something similar in the second chapter during the cosmic travel, calling Earth a 'mere star'. This perhaps could be referred to from Carl Sagan's work/ reflection on the *'Pale Blue Dot'*- a photograph taken from afar by the spacecraft Voyager One in the year 1990, making it the spacecraft's last photograph before it left the Solar System. His work, with the same name, published in the year 1997, expressed the insignificance of planet Earth in comparison to the entirety of outer space/ universe. With the literal portrayal of the planet as a 'pale blue dot' from afar, it showed how tiny and minute known humanity was, despite how vast and precious humankind is. Sagan interpreted and articulated astronomy to be a humbling experience, "To me, it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another, and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known" (Sagan, 1997, p.no., 13). Creating a sense of cosmic existential thought and insignificance to find purpose in this vast and evolving universe. Stapledon continued with his stylistic choice as graphic and descriptive, while expressing the interstellar expedition in the second chapter and further.

3.7) Chapter Two- Interstellar Travel

While he travels across galaxies, his thoughts still go back to Earth. Pondering his house and everything else that made him feel at home. It's when he finally realizes that he was not just travelling through space, he was travelling through time as well, at immense speed. Due to the narrator's introspective and existential nature, while being deep in thought, he does not realize or can comprehend any of this travel fully until he is already beyond Mars' orbit. While travelling further away from his planet, then slowly away from the solar system, he would often imagine his home and would struggle to stay put. He would see his lover in front of his house. But he would come back to reality-to the stars.

In this journey, he experiences multiple worlds. Since he travelled through space and time, he could go back and forth in time- that is, the narrator experienced places/ worlds that were born before or after some civilizations, for example, before or even after Earth's civilization. The reader realises that this variety of 'aliens' and creatures that the narrator encounters in the different civilizations also has a sense of consciousness and spiritual and existential crises. Stapledon gave these creatures nomenclature such as "Nautiloids, symbiotic ichthyoid-arachoids, bird composites, plantmen, etc." (Touponce, 1930-59, p.no., 12), distinguishing every creature from each other.

3.8) Telepathic Phenomenon

The other factor was that he came across worlds with life and was eventually and ultimately able to connect minds with the civilians of multiple worlds every time he entered one. Hence, a collective mind was created. This telepathic experience was called "telepathic intercourse", which the narrator claimed was painful to perform in the beginning. He explained how the reason why he needed a connection- "to effect some kind of mental and spiritual traffic with other worlds for mutual enrichment and community" (Stapledon, 1937, p.no., 21). The first civilization, which he called 'the other Earth' that he came across, he called the people 'the other men', he wanted to make communication with these people to learn about their livelihood, but didn't know how to because of their lack of a language system. That was when this 'telepathic intercourse' came into play. He had encountered one of them, and had followed them till where they lived, that's where he discovered this phenomenon of entering each other's minds.

Once learnt, he began entering into everyone's minds and coalesced and lived through their (the hosts') lives, while keeping in mind to maintain his sense of individuality and intellect. It took quite a lot of time

to adjust to this sudden discovery, while he travelled from one country to another, trying to learn and gather information through entering the inhabitants' minds and souls, which got the narrator into a lot of trouble. The inhabitants assumed that he was a disease and was sent to a mental institution. That was when the philosopher- Bvalltu had taken him into consideration when one of his hosts had talked to Bvalltu about the same. Bvalltu had let the narrator enter his mind and led the protagonist to attain enlightenment.

3.9) Cosmic Existentialism

The following events in the novel revolved around the exploration of the Other Earth, learning about their 'culture' and habitat. A constant comparison with the narrator's home planet, finding differences as well as similarities. Learnt about their animal creatures and their tendencies (such as the dynamics of the mother creature and their offspring). He also discovered the aspect of modernization on the planet, the technology advancements and industrialism.

This enlightenment, caused by all the information that he got access to through the mind of the Bvalltu, gave rise to the existential thought concerning the cosmos- cosmic existentialism. The personal anxieties that he had already experienced only escalated with time throughout his journey. A sense of isolation is expressed towards the beginning of the novel, such as when the narrator could not grasp an understanding of the Other Earth before discovering the telepathic intercourse and performing a collective mind. Hence, through this forming of a collective mind and creating unity, to an extent, there was a sense of relief from this existential isolation.

Ever since the narrator transcended to outer space, away from Earth, as mentioned previously about Sagan's *Pale Blue Dot (1997),* due to the deep venture of an ordinary being in an unprecedented manner to the entirety of the known universe, it created sudden realization of how tiny and insignificant human life is. Hence, the existential take on it would be that of a constant search for meaning and purpose in a world/ universe that lacked inherent meaning.

In *Star Maker,* the narrator, the fictional author, was on a search/ quest for familiarity. He compared almost everything he came across, such as the discovery of animal family dynamics, the mothers feeding their offspring. Land spaces that looked like England. Comparing things with a familiar gaze, in search of perhaps community and purpose. Without which would create existential dread, and it did to the narrator. He realized he would not find anyone like him- human, instead he would probably find 'spiders and creeping

jellies' (Stapledon, 1937, p.no., 19). The understanding of existential dread and despair could be done through the absurd. The world being meaningless as in with no inherent meaning, existentially would mean the drive to create meaning regardless of no meaning provided by the universe/ world. "the existentialist despair is a state in which on is not overtly in despair. Man's identity depends on qualities that can crumble. He is found to be in perpetual despair" (Jha, 2020, p.no., 62). According to Sartre and Kierkegaard, despair was a part of life.

Sartre's 'existence precedes essence' argument is also often applied in instances of *Star Maker*. Parts where the narrator could not predict the manner of existence of species and inhabitants from the Other Earth, as well as in the other civilizations he encountered. With time and his exploration, he came across different aspects of various civilizations through the way he approached them. There are instances where, towards the middle of the novel, the narrator created telepathic intercourse with a few hosts from various civilizations and created a collective mind and consciousness. The narrator then observed the inhabitants of different worlds (who he realizes to have similar human-like ideologies) trying and searching for purpose in many ways. In search of purpose, they found (as well as created) the entity of 'God', but in various aspects differing from the ones on Earth that the narrator was familiar with.

3.91) The Notion of God and Religion

Various civilizations created religions concerning their existential situations and needs. In the first chapter, Stapledon introduced the entity of *Star Maker,* in the context of the narrator in deep existential introspection regarding this mere existence and the real purpose and meaning of such existence, value. Questions about the existence of a creator who created life in the entirety of the cosmos, with purpose, then perhaps would have a planned timeline provided to all. He had observed that for many civilizations, the one thing that united them all on a cosmic scale was religion and a sense of direction to faith (in searching for purpose). There were the birth and death of civilizations in front of the narrator and his hosts, collectively as one cosmic mind experiencing the same. Hence, creating a sense of doubt about an existence that transcends beyond mortality- the creator. He could not afford to lose hope; he had to continue his venture and find perhaps the ultimate meaning- *Star Maker*.

3.92) Meeting Star Maker

Did the creator create to see ultimate and mortal life blossom, or as an act of self-expression? Nearing the

end of the novel, he finally got the chance to meet the Creator. Shone as bright as a star, creating an ambience of a 'heavenly' body. Keeping up with the speculations of his existence across all worlds. The narrator could physically feel the creator's presence. With a sudden and harsh encounter instead of the softness and the 'open arms' perception of God (the understanding regarding the image of god on Earth), he finally faced God. The gaze was demeaning to an extent. *Star Maker* looked down on him, as if an artist looking/ judging at his piece. Observing the imperfections, he lusts for the next (creation). He was agonised to face reality, where something (someone) whom they 'prayed' for the search for answers of meaning and purpose, was just a 'ruthless maker' (ibid.). That led to perhaps a personal revelation, "I cried out that, after all, the creature was nobler than the creator; for the creature loved and craved love, even from the star that was the Star Maker; but the creator, the Star Maker, neither loved nor had the need of love" (Stapledon, 1937, p.no., 163). Star Maker experimented with the lives, causing deliberate death and suffering.

This could be interpreted further through one of the elements by Nietzsche, regarding "The Death of God". Although centric to Christianity, the narrator often indicates the comparison of the divine and cosmic entity, Star Maker and its following (by all civilizations) with that of Christianity as a religion and as an entity. This was rather a 'post' 'death of god', "It has, indeed, been one of the chief functions of the post-Death-of-God literary genre called science fiction to create such a new mytho-cosmology in place of the defunct Judeo-Christian one" (Fiedler, 1983, p.no., 134). Fiedler further claimed that no other such work succeeded like this one concerning the theme. Nietzsche's notion of the "Übermensch" (superman) (Fischer, 1964, p.no., 1012), who just creates. Star Maker could be some sort of cosmic Übermensch- who creates lives and destroys them deliberately and does not get involved in any sort of morality.

Therefore, *Star Maker* could perhaps be considered post-theology by Nietzsche. There forms a sense of sublime in the cosmos, due to its indifference with respect to the Creator and its essence. An anti-anthropocentric thought, evoked by both Stapledon and Nietzsche, when it comes to God and religion. But on the contrary, still encourages life.

3.93) Conclusion

Ultimately, the narrator comes to terms with Satr Maker and his intentions, he gives in. He attains enlightenment among the sublime: "For suddenly it was clear to me that virtue in the creator is not the same as the virtue in the creature" (Stapledon, 1937, p.no., 183). This referred to the difference in understanding

about context. The creator's virtue was to create and remain infinite, whereas for the creature, the virtue was to love and have faith. He confronted the creator and expressed his frustration, he claims to have had enough to be one of the rough sketches of a more perfected and impeccable art piece. This gradually leads to his death and decay.

Through this novel, there has been a sharp portrayal of outer space perceived as cold (metaphorical) in a hypercosmical setting. Finitude in meaning and understanding of the universe, which does not contribute to providing the same, giving rise to crises and dread, although existential (Nietzsche's understanding). This cosmic existential thought gave rise to a heightened drive to keep living and exploring, to continue this venture of meaning and purpose in this cold and infinite universe.

CHAPTER 3: SOLARIS – JOURNEY TO THE MIND

4.1) Introducing Stanislaw Lem

Stanislaw Lem, a Polish writer, was one of the most influential science-fiction writers in his time and remains so. He was also an active philosopher with philosophical books published, as well as such topics being covered in his fiction and non-fiction works. Similar to Olaf Stapledon, Lem was also a futurist, with speculative and futurist narratives, perhaps being part of the utopian literature. His narratives of this kind have been consistently relevant and accurate in terms of technology. Such as the notion of the Internet, AI, robotics, synthetic poetry and much more (Lukasik, 2022, p.no., 11). Lem is considered to be a "high brow", which refers to the fact that he was a distinguished and mainstream writer (that is, more in-depth) rather than just a SF genre writer (Kajtoch, 2002, p.no., 38). His works primarily focus on the mind, in-depth introspection, the cosmos, as well as solidarity concerning evolution. One of his renowned works in SF was *Solaris (1961).*

Another stylistic choice that Lem had was the fact that he would not specify any cultural background and context when describing places and people. Therefore, it led to such texts being an ultimate understanding and reflection of the real world. This was often taken as an issue with regard to its commonality since the post-Second World War literature. (Kajtoch, 2002, p.no., 38).

Before the period when Lem wrote *Solaris,* he had shifted his interests from the futuristic and technology-centric narratives (utopian narratives) and had chosen a more modernist approach to writing novels. He realized the liberty of the writer to morph realities and shape them with freedom in a more personal and intimate narrative. Taking inspiration from Mann as well as Dostoevsky and their approach to writing. Led to his interest in psychological realism. Although not entirely shifting to that aspect, he still held onto the science fiction and cosmic narratives. Ultimately created the artistic realm of *Solaris (1961).*

Introduction to the Book

Published in the year 1961, *Solaris,* was one of the most influential and famous novels by Lem. An exploration of the genres of cosmic existential and science fiction, in a style original to Lem. Shifting from the conventional science fiction narratives, with references of psychoanalytic traces, giving space for reformative writing (Kajtoch, 2002, p.no., 44).

Being apart from the conventional SF, it delves more into the existential notion of contingency. The nature of consciousness and the constant lingering of memory and guilt from a more personal and intimate perspective. With unconventional tones of the Other (alien presence and intelligence), it also dealt with the cosmic dilemma of confronting the newfound life on the alien planet by changing their beliefs and moralities. Creating a sense of existential crisis and dread, and the absurd in the world of Solaris. This approach by Lem was perhaps influenced by the economic and political situation around the mid to late nineteenth century in Europe.

4.3) Historical Context of *Solaris* at the Time of Publication

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, Poland was occupied by the advent of Western mass culture, American SF being one of the elements of the same. That Lem had discovered it on the way. Ever since, there has been a heightened emergence of the genre. Creating a major yet often neglected difference with the genre of Utopian Literature based in Europe. The main and crucial difference was the stance of technology as being a secondary source rather than being the primary and ultimate element of the narratives. Hence, kept under the lesser spotlight than that of the elements of fantasy and the ultimate narrative.

The era during the 60s was occupied with multiple upheavals. A shift in cultural atmosphere, after Stalin's death, opened areas to explore, such as existentialism and literature. This fascination with a new era with new practices created a platform for writers like Lem to flourish with such unconventional SF novels (Kajtoch, 2002, p.no., 42).

4.4) Understanding *Solaris*

Solaris was essentially the planet where a group of scientists had travelled to in search of habitable life as well as research. Although the novel began with Kelvin, the protagonist's journey to the orbit of the planet (to the space station). Expressing discomfort with the advancement in technology of spaceships and their systems while preparing for the ride to Solaris. Kelvin portrays to be uneasy and anxious during the travel, expressing discomfort in the spacesuit as well as the small cabin (seat) he was given. Through this, one can grasp the notion of dread of what Kelvin was approaching and what he was going to encounter or perhaps something (perhaps a burden) that he has always predominantly had in him. Although his form of distraction was that of awe at the view of the planet. One could also grasp the futuristic narrative approach in describing

the assets in the novel, the advancement in the construction of space travel. Given that the novel was written and published in the year 1961.

The planet he was travelling to was entirely a water body. Lem made it significant by not naming it and leaving it be as 'the ocean' (Lem, 1961, p.no., 4). Which was a mystery element in the novel in its entirety. Throughout all the years of research on the planet as well as of the Ocean, the dynamics of this ocean were not completely graspable or comprehensible. One later finds out the reason behind Kelvin's venture to the planet. He was a psychologist who was sent to oversee and evaluate the project of research project and observe the psychological situation of the existing crew of the ship. Given that one of the crew members had committed suicide- Gibarian. As well as the fact that this scientific exploration of *Solaris* was exhausted- if it had come to an end and had no solutions that could have been made, and ultimately abandoned this research once and for all, (the ocean's exploration as an entity).

It was also revealed that there was a new phenomenon 'emitting' from the Ocean, which was called "Phi-creations" (Lem, 1961, p. no. 100). The reason behind the disruption of the crew. This phenomenon is referred to as creating hallucination-like images taken from the memories of the crew and their personal lives. To which, ultimately, Kelvin becomes a victim. This becomes one of the most crucial elements throughout the novel, to which various cosmic existential themes could be referred.

4.5) Meeting the Crew

Later, after he enters the space station, he meets one of the crew members, Snow. Who seems to be a bit distraught when encountering Kelvin. As if he had not expected him to be here (so soon). He behaved haphazardly, a bit intoxicated and fidgety, while he tried to interact with Kelvin. He pretended as if he did not know Kelvin. He was Gibarian's deputy. Once asked about him by Snow, he was even more distraught and full of terror. Snow continued his attempts to escape from Gibarian, being brought up in their conversation, to which Kelvin got frustrated and left him be.

The second chapter is when Kelvin finds a room for himself after quite a bit of exploring. He walked down the hallway and stopped in front of a metal door. All doors were named as per the people of the crew, except for the fourth one, to which he had hesitantly entered. The following content in the chapter revolved around the entire expedition of Solaris. That it had been discovered ages before Kelvin was born, and still, the

mystery behind the ocean could not be solved.

Kelvin later tried to connect the dots of Snow's eerie behavior as well as the death of Gibarian. He realized another sense of eeriness the moment he saw a small girl pass by to whom he called, "a monstrous Aphrodite" (Lem, 1961, p.no., 30). That 'creature' walked inside Gibarian's room, to which he eventually followed. That was the first instance, that was visible to Kelvin, of phi-creation. There were undertones of Snow having one as well.

Dr. Sartorius was also a bit of an eerie character. When Kelvin had gone in search of him in the space station, he kept knocking on the door, expecting him to open the door; he even shouted to let the doctor know that it was him. To the point that Kelvin had threatened to break the door if he did not let him enter, only to hear a lot of struggle or rather some rummaging around the room that could be heard. Dr. Sartorius had finally responded but had asked him to give his word not to enter the room if he opened the door. To which Kelvin suggested for him to rather come out. Which he did. These eerie behaviors gave rise to a more doubtful and suspicion-stricken Kelvin. Out of intense frustration, he called Dr. Sartorius a coward as well as a suspect (for Gibarian's death)

Havoc goes on in the space station, Kelvin continues to search for clues. Kelvin would often look out of the space station's windows to take a glance at the ocean. Even though Kelvin showed frustration and anger, he trembled when he went on his solo quests, it was the lack of knowledge that created uneasiness and distress. When he encountered Snow, he asked him about the lack of answers regarding the presence of 'other-worldly' beings/ creatures, to which Snow answered, "When you've received some visitors yourself, you'll understand" (Lem, 1961, p.no., 46). In one of his quest, he found a 'cold store', a room, that was where he found Gibarian. His ice-cold body. But along with his body, Kelvin also found a girl's body that was also ice-cold, who apparently happened to be alive. He left that setting. Concluded that this was pure madness. In the sense that he had gone mad, with hallucinations. "Emanations from the ocean had attacked my brain, and hallucination had followed hallucination" (ibid.). To which he decided to get himself medical attention.

4.6) The Ocean and Rheya

In chapter three, Kelvin encounters his wife in his room. His wife had been dead for ten years. He was sure it was a dream. But he realized it was not when he woke up the next time. She was in the same attire, the

one she died in. He was frightened to think of it as reality. A sense of existential contingency of grief and guilt that Kelvin faced when he encountered his lover. Hence, the dilemma that he had faced, which was whether to be happy that she was here or not, because she should not be. Ultimately falling as a victim to the ocean's phi-creation. Creating a sense of the absurd. As well as dealing with the unknown (Grabarczyk, 2020, p.no., 70). He realized that this was what Snow referred to as guests. If these guests were the products of the ocean, it still could not explain the entirety of the ocean's nature and functionality (perhaps personality).

The ocean, an entity difficult to comprehend, was the central aspect (for understanding) of the planet of *Solaris*. It created the atmosphere for the planet. The ocean could also be understood as a metaphor concerning the absurd. Since it is beyond comprehension and human understanding, despite being studied for so long by scientists. To which Kelvin constantly searches for meaning and purpose (and intentions) in something that has no ultimate inherent meaning to provide. Hence, creating a sort of an absurd situation for all the crew members residing in the space station. This could be understood by Sartre' play *No Exit* (1944), where the people taken to hell were trapped in their minds (introspection), dealing with the void and other existential crises. Which is observed here, *Solaris* created that space of isolation and no guidance for betterment. With the ending where Kelvin stayed back with the idea of his dead wife- the 'phi-creation' from the ocean.

The previously mentioned understanding of the search for meaning referred to the fact that this meaning is projected onto the planet, creating an anthropomorphic understanding of the same. Taking reference from Nietzsche's idea of the "abyss" meaning was perhaps not truth, on the cosmic scale. The other cosmic existential element in this novel would be something that has been constantly portrayed throughout the book, that was infinite possibility on the cosmic scale. The fact that the ocean could not be understood despite there being research way before Kelvin was born, induces cosmic and existential anxiety of the unknown (and their potentiality).

4.7) Concluding *Solaris*

Therefore, through *Solaris (1961),* one can get an idea of the stylistic approaches taken by Stanislaw Lem, an influential SF and philosophy writer. Such as futuristic narratives with existential notions. Going beyond

conventional science fiction into cosmic existentialism and other aspects of existentialism, such as absurdism, understanding the protagonist and his dilemmas, as well as the presence of the phi-creatures from the ocean. This novel touched aspects of alienation, isolation, how humans perceive meaning and much more on a cosmic yet intimate scale.

CONCLUSION

Through this dissertation, one gets a gist of the term- Cosmic Existentialism, through the external support of the novels- *Star Maker (1937)* and *Solaris (1961).* Delving into th4em as two essential pillars of this thematic lens of existentialism. The one of the many similarities from the two novels being a genre of philosophical literature that deals with the insignificance of humankind in an incomprehensible universe. In other words, the cosmos has no inherent meaning, it is the quest of the humankind to constantly search for it with the hope of finding it but not with the truth of whether it would ultimately be found. Hence, a kind of subliminal understanding/ realization.

Both the authors made sure to spread the notion of acceptance of the universe's indifference as a matter of fact and not as something to be regretful about. Stapledon's *Star Maker* described the depiction of the creator or the cosmos and their behavior when encountered with one of his creations. To be looked upon like a mere creation, an imperfect art piece. The understanding that the creator is the one who just creates. With no regards of the creation's life afterwards, whether there is death or life, it did not matter to the creator- created for the sake of creating.

In *Solaris*, this aspect was regarded to the existence of the ocean. The ocean stayed indifferent despite of the fact that these 'solarists' had been on their research for multiple decades, with no comprehension regarding the ocean's functionality and role in the planet. Even though these scientists did try to learn about its patterns, which the ocean did not perceive to have in reality. Which could be inferred to the actual reality where the cosmos cannot be completely understood and grasped. There is no pattern, no a priori knowledge in the cosmos. Stapledon's novel exposed the quantitative insignificance of human thought and understanding. Whereas Lem's novel does regarding the qualitative limitation of the same with respect to the huge research efforts put by the solarists towards the understanding the ocean. both have anthropocentric traces (not mentioned in the thesis but have undertones of it in between).

There have been other undertones as well as direct explanations of cosmic existentialism throughout this dissertation in the context of the two novels. The two tangents of this lens of existentialism, where one being the aspect of essence and meaning/ purpose (*Star Maker*) while the other tangent being that of the intimate (*Solaris*). While both had differences in narrative such as mentioned above, there were many similarities as well. In other aspects, both the writers preferred futurist narratives, hence, both the novels

had undertones of such a narrative. There were also ultimate similarities in the notion of cosmic existentialism, such as the understanding of isolation, the narrator in Star Maker while in search for purpose while the other-worldly journey; and the feeling of isolation, the undertones, that Kelvin had from the beginning of the novel, aggravated during the time when none of the crew members let him know the truth, and had to go on his own in search for it, the spiraling that he experienced in search for meaning (for reason/ intention).

When ultimately, the protagonists from both the novels did what they could have done in order to 'give in', in the sense that there is always going to be a quest for meaning, to understand, to attain knowledge. A very anthropocentric approach. Star Maker's protagonist gives in and perhaps accepts the way Star Maker perceived to be- just a creator. A sense of disembodied consciousness is what he felt, while merging with the cosmic mind, he becomes a passive observer who has transcended way beyond human understanding. Kelvin, on the other hand, stays back in *Solaris.* Giving in to the comfort of his lover, perhaps the idea of her, which was created by the ocean from Kelvin's memories, rather than live in misery.

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